

Message Text

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61

ACTION EA-14

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FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1842

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MELBOURNE 1104

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: DISCUSSIONS WITH WESTERN AUSTRALIA TRADES AND LABOR
COUNCIL

REF: HE HOLT 251730Z OCTOBER 1973

1. LABATT ROUNDUP PUTS USEFUL PERSPECTIVE TO FACTUAL REFTEL
REPORT BY NAVY COMMUNICATIONS STATION COMMANDING OFFICER
CAPTAIN RICHARD CUNNINGHAM. INFORMATION REFTEL CONTAINS WILL
NOT BE REPEATED SINCE CONTENTS AVAILABLE ALL END-USERS.

2. LABATT REPORTS THAT PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF DISCUSSIONS WAS
TO REMOVE POSSIBILITY OF STRIKE OVER ISSUE OF CURRENT CONTRACT
LABOR AT NAVY STATION. THIS OBJECTIVE WAS ACHIEVED. IN FACT
SUBJECT STRIKE WAS SUCH DEAD ISSUE IT NOT EVEN DISCUSSED IN
DETAIL AT OCTOBER 24 MEETING.

3. CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM'S APPRAISAL OF GOOD STATUS OF NAVY
OPERATION WITH LOCAL AND FEDERAL OFFICIALS CAN BE CONFIRMED.
ADDITIONALLY, MELBOURNE-BASED FEDERAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
LABOR FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, M.J. KEOGH, TOLD LABATT
OCTOBER 26 THAT HE IS AWARE OF NORTH WEST CAPE SITUATION
AND HAS MADE IT MATTER OF OFFICIAL CONCERN FOR HIS
DEPARTMENT'S REPRESENTATIVES IN PERTH. ASSISTANT SECRETARY
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KEOGH HAS ASKED LABATT TO KEEP HIM ADVISED; HE AGREED, WHEN

GIVEN DETAILS OF OCTOBER 24 MEETING, THAT SOME METHOD OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN NAVY AND PERTH-BASED TRADE UNION COUNCIL LONG OVERDUE BECAUSE OF DISTANCE BETWEEN PARTIES CONCERNED.

4. AS EXPRESSED BY SECRETARY COLEMAN, MOOD OF TRADES AND LABOR COUNCIL (TLC) MEMBERS, WITH EXCEPTION WILLIAM LATTER, WAS ONE OF SATISFACTION. WHILE MUCH TIME, AS NOTED BY CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM, WAS TAKEN UP IN DISCUSSING SIDE ISSUES, COLEMAN PROPOSAL WHICH PROVIDES PRIOR CONSULTATION WAS SATISFACTORY TO MAJORITY PRESENT.

5. BASIC CONCERN OF TLC IS APPARENTLY OVER DIMINISHING LEVEL OF AUSTRALIAN WORKFORCE AS COMPARED TO CONSTANT LEVEL MAINTAINED IN NUMBER OF SEABEES PRESENT AT BASE. THIS IS ISSUE WHICH WILL NOT ABATE BUT CAN BE HELD IN CHECK BY CONTINUED FRANKNESS BY NAVY OFFICIALS, AND AVOIDANCE USE OF NAVY WORKERS ON PROJECTS DONE IN PAST BY AUSTRALIAN LABOR.

6. LABATT CONCURS WITH CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM ESTIMATE THAT THERE MAY BE SOME MISCHIEVOUS ACTION AND BAD PRESS. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS APPARENT THAT WILLIAM LATTER'S ALLEGATION THAT NAVY ATTEMPTING TO IDENTIFY HIM AS COMMUNIST IS GOOD INDICATION THAT HE OBTAINED NO USEFUL AMMUNITION AT OCTOBER 24 MEETING AND THEREFORE HAD RECOURSE TO PUBLICIZING DEFENSE (REFTEL) AGAINST ALLEGED U.S. NAVY ACCUSATION OF COMMUNIST AFFILIATION. ON PAST PERFORMANCE LATTER WOULD HAVE USED ANY EXCUSE TO PUBLICIZE DETAILS OF MEETING IF HE THOUGHT HE HAD ANYTHING TO TALK ABOUT. LATTER HAS OPPOSED AMERICAN BASES AND WILL NEVER BE CONVINCED THAT ANYTHING ABOUT THEM CAN BE GOOD. LABATT FEELS THAT MEETING WAS USEFUL CATHARSIS SESSION AND FINDS NAVY RESTRAINT IN FACE OF LATTER'S VENTED SPLEEN COMMENDABLE. FLUKER

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